



THE WARBLER

*A periodic newsletter of the Friends of Welty Environmental Center
Volume 17, Issue 2*

WELTY'S MISSION

To provide leadership in environmental and ecological education to students, teachers, and individuals of all ages, so that residents of this region can make informed decisions leading to respect for and the enjoyment, preservation, and sustainable use of our natural resources.

2017-18 BOARD

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE by Mark Spreitzer

It's been a busy spring and summer at Welty since our last Warbler. After serving on the Board of Directors for the last two years, I was honored to be elected President of the Board in April at the annual meeting. I'm joined by many new board members who are bringing new energy to Welty, and I'm thankful for the many years of service of our board members whose terms ended in April.

We've also hired a new half-time Environmental Educator, Andy Tuszynski, who is helping Sam meet our increased demand for programming. Increasing our teaching staff has allowed Welty to begin a new partnership with Nature at the Confluence in South Beloit, where we have a full summer of programs at their brand new facility in addition to our programs at Big Hill Park and other locations. We are also excited to be working with the School District of Beloit on new class trips for the fall, and are actively seeking opportunities to partner with other organizations to bring environmental education to their members and the areas we serve.

I'm excited to continue Welty's growth with the help of a great board and great staff. We're having a very busy summer and I hope you can join us for some of our activities. As heat and humidity eventually give way to cooler weather and changing colors, I'm excited for our fall programming and continued opportunities for us to reach more people and grow as an organization. Thank you for coming on this journey with us.



FALL EVENTS AT WELTY

SEPTEMBER

19 (TUESDAY) Outdoor Photography; Capturing the Beauty of Nature
9-11am, Adult program at Welty Center, \$5

14 (THURSDAY) Nature at the Confluence, Crazy Water Critters
4-6pm, Ages 5-13 yrs, At NATC, free.

23 (SATURDAY) Nature at the Confluence, Family Fun Freshwater Biology
9-12pm, All ages, At NATC, free.

27 (MONDAY) Prairie Seed Collection
5-7pm, All ages, free.

OCTOBER

4 (WEDNESDAY) Raptor Program with Hoo's Woods Raptor Center
6-7pm, All ages at Welty Center, \$3 donation

28 (SATURDAY) Ookie, Spookie Uke Circle, Halloween Family Trail Hike
4:30-8pm, all ages, Uke Circle free, Hike \$5.

For more info call 608-362-6212 or visit: www.weltycenter.org

PROGRAM DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE by Samantha Foster

.....New Beginnings

As we take a much needed breath from our busy Spring and Summer, I am reminded that the past twelve months have been about "new beginnings" for both WEC and for myself.

This time last year marked the Welty Environmental Center's first summer in our new location at Big Hill Park and it marked a new beginning for me, as Welty's Program Director.

This Spring and Summer have been busy with all of the Beloit School District 3rd graders coming out for the annual Maple Sugaring Experience and all of the 5th graders participating in ecology field experience hikes. Over 1,000 students participated.

We kicked off June camps with Junior Naturalist training and now have a few incredible local youth helping us facilitate our summer programs. In addition to several week-long camps and day camp programs, we have also partnered with *Nature At the Confluence* to provide stream study programs for the community.

The last twelve months have provided countless opportunities to meet wonderful folks in Beloit and surrounding communities who also recognize the value of getting our youth connected to the great outdoors. Through these connections, Welty has been able to reach even more of our area youth.

We have two wonderful home school groups that have scheduled monthly programs in science for the upcoming school year. We are continuing to work with the school district to provide positive outdoor experiences for the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th graders and after school programming for Gaston elementary school. We are now adding curriculum/programming for the district's 4th graders.

I look forward to the continued growth of our WEC programming.



2017 GRANTS RECEIVED—SO FAR

Welty has been the lucky recipient of several local grants that provide funds for collaborative programming (\$2000, Stateline Community Foundation Community Impact Grant), equipment (\$225, Kiwanis; \$1660, Rotary), and a program room upgrade and a trail map for Big Hill Park (\$6475, Visit Beloit J.E.T. grant).

The SCF grant supports a partnership with Evenstart Family Literacy Program, a cooperative effort between Blackhawk Technical College and the Beloit School District that serves adult students and their preschool-age children. This programming provides families a safe, structured opportunity to get outside and engage in nature, while reinforcing English language-learning and helping children get ready to attend full-day elementary school.

The Kiwanis grant helps Welty purchase tech supplies to be used on school field trips and with summer camp. The grant paid for digital light meters that measure the brightness of an area quantitatively, digital temperature gauges, and the balance went towards a tablet we can use with our digital microscopes.

We also received money from the Rotary Club of Beloit to help pay for stream monitoring supplies, which includes hip boots, D-nets, and viewing equipment.

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WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF WELTY CAMP?

The Warbler asked August campers about their week at Big Hill park. Here is what they said:



"The butterfly mobile was my favorite activity. We made one to hang in our mud room for Frankie, our dog, to enjoy." *Luc D.*



"I learned that mud is disgusting. There was a stump full of chunky mud and I touched it. And mud is fun." *Ava D.*



"I learned a lot more about butterflies and how to tell a boy monarch from a girl monarch." *Leo D.*



"I liked making Solar Leaf Prints and playing Stinger." *Alec R.*

**WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE
PART OF CAMP?
(CONTINUED)**



“The funnest thing we did was making dream catchers, because of the weaving,” *Tia B.*



“I learned that you can make stuff out of grapevines (from the bike path), like dreamcatchers and baskets.” *Zeke W.*



“I like going to the lower playground, because it’s fun to play games there, like Sharks and Minnows.” *Jack B.*



DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE by Brenda K. Plakans

I am pleased to report that my first year as Welty’s development director has been a good one. It has been a bit challenging, as we continue to fine-tune the requirements of the position with the needs of the organization, but also very inspiring to be a part of the work that Welty does to bring environmental education to the community.

Welty had a good spring and summer of development, with most of our grant proposals getting funded (see p. 2) and several more in the pipeline. We experimented with running a second Appeal mailing in April, as a follow-up to our end-of-the-year effort, intending to catch former donors who missed the first round. This turned out to be a worthwhile endeavor, as it required minimal effort to generate a new letter and revise the mailing list, but netted over \$3000. This helps us gauge whether members prefer to give at different times in the year, and also shows us who to include on our annual mailing list.

We’ve also been able to establish extended collaborations with several programming partners (NATC, School District of Beloit, Taproot Homeschool Group), in addition to good attendance for our summer camps and other public programs (see p. 2). We’ve rebounded well from our staff turnover last year, and are looking forward to many great partnerships and programs as we move into the 2017-18 school year.

An ongoing challenge for Samantha, myself, and the Board, is trying to figure out what is Welty’s true cost of doing business. We try to keep our programming fees low, so that participants and groups can afford to visit, but these amounts only partially cover our costs. Overhead expenses (office supplies, utilities, website, mileage) are a sizeable portion of our budget that is essential to our mission (you can’t connect people with nature if you can’t afford a phone), but requires unrestricted funding. Corporate and foundation donors prefer to pay for specific programs or purchases, but often don’t want to fund salaries or overhead, so we are unable to cover these costs through grants.

We are endlessly grateful to our generous supporters, many who have been helping Welty since its founding in 2000. Our annual appeal is our main fundraiser to generate the kind of unrestricted income that Welty needs to keep our doors open and build capacity by expanding our reach and influence in the Stateline area. Donor organizations are starting to realize the importance of overhead support, but small not-for-profits like Welty still depend on member donations (41% of our budget) to cover their costs.

We are attempting to reach deeper into the business community for donations, and work with our program partners to determine a fair price for Welty’s services. We will continue to adjust our appeal campaign to reach as many stakeholders as possible. But—as it says in the name—we are not in the business of making a profit, so we require a variety of funding sources to help realize our mission. This has been a good year development-wise, and the future looks bright, but we need to be realistic and strategic about how we approach our fundraising. I look forward to continued steady growth moving into Year #2!

2017 GRANTS-CONTINUED FROM P.2

The Joint Effort in Tourism (J.E.T.) grant comes from hotel and motel taxes collected by the City of Beloit and can be used for projects that promote Beloit as a tourist destination. Welty will be able to redesign the program room with fresh paint, enlarged Big Hill photos, an improved reading corner and updated specimen collection. The final third of the grant goes towards creating a new trail map for Big Hill Park, using G.I.S. (Geographic Information Systems) technology to accurately plot trail location and create an attractive, readable map that can be used in park brochures and on interpretive signage.

It’s exciting to be this successful in 2017 grant writing, so far, and we are very grateful for so much local support. We have several more applications to submit this summer that, hopefully, will be approved and will support fall programming.

SPENDING THE SUMMER AS A JUNIOR NATURALIST by Barb Seguin

Spencer Vestin thinks his training as a Junior Naturalist was very worthwhile. He liked going out in nature and learning about science and soils. He was part of the one week training in early June. Spencer is 15 years old and is being home schooled. He lives in Monroe, Wisconsin.

According to Andy Tuszynski, Welty's new environmental educator, the purpose of the Junior Naturalist Program is to give older kids, 13+, an opportunity to gain experience in leadership through outdoor education. They learn communication skills and gain confidence. They do a lot of hiking and participate in camp activities and games they can then teach to younger kids.



Junior Naturalists learn group dynamics and how to engage children and keep them from getting bored. They learn about safety and how to use a field guide when they are unable to identify something.

After being trained in early June, four junior naturalists helped with the Bugs Camp. They were a huge help, because leaders were able to break the children into groups, led by a Junior Naturalist, to go out and discover and identify bugs together.

Spencer was one of those volunteers. He loved working with the younger children. "We caught bugs, learned about invasive bugs like the emerald ash borer and what they did. We saw a green and blue dragonfly. The kids liked it and tried to catch it." Spencer said they used an insect book to identify it.

Andy says that children seem to relate better to older children than to adults. Junior Naturalists can lead hiking groups. They can show children how to interact appropriately with nature, such as learning the proper way to hold a butterfly.

When asked if he thought the Junior Naturalist program would help him in his future career, Spencer said he thought it would. He wants to be a zoologist or herpetologist, or, maybe, a teacher.

STREAM TEAM PARTNERSHIP WITH NATURE AT THE CONFLUENCE

After many years of planning, Nature At The Confluence--an initiative funded by Beloit 2020 to transform the area of South Beloit where Turtle Creek meets the Rock River--officially opened its Learning Center on June 17, 2017. Welty was there for the big opening day and will continue to partner with NATC to provide programming throughout the summer.

The NATC campus sits on land that was used as an industrial dumping ground for over 100 years. It is also a site of historical significance, as it has been used by humans for more than 13,000 years. Ancient hunters, native American mound-builders, French fur traders, and today's river explorers have all traversed the area. This history of the space along the banks of the waterways make the Confluence an appropriate site to tell a very important story about urban ecology and renewal.

Welty is leading programs that form the basis of NATC's Stream Team, a multi-faceted approach to engage local citizens as stewards of the community's land and water assets. These activities include citizen science stream monitoring, plant ID instruction, macroinvertebrates studies, and workshops for building rain barrels and container gardens. Through hands-on investigations of the NATC waterways, participants are learning best practices for water quality data collection as well as getting to wade around and investigate the site and its inhabitants. Most of these programs are free, thanks to a grant from Illinois American Water and Col. Robert H. Morse Foundation.

We still have some Stream Team dates left in September, so come take a look (see p. 1 for times)!



WELCOME TO OUR NEW 2017-18 BOARD MEMBERS

The Warbler asked our new board members to write brief introductions, which are shared below. In addition to our regular committees of Development, Program, Membership & Volunteer, Personnel, and Finance, the board has added PR & Marketing, and Prairie Restoration & Park Interface committees to address some of Welty's strategic goals. Non-board members are always welcome to serve on a committee, so please let us know if you are interested; it is a great way to get involved with Welty and support a specific area.

JAIME BENEDICT

I recently joined the Board at Welty Environmental Center. I am an attorney licensed in Illinois and Wisconsin. My family and I enjoy participating in the programs offered at Welty, as well as hiking in Big Hill Park. Last year, I began volunteering at Welty during large school group programs to educate children about nature, wildlife, and ecology. In my free time, I enjoy taking trips with my family, horseback riding, and reading.

JUDY ROBSON

I want to serve on the Welty board in order to continue my service and commitment to the environment in another capacity. During my 23 years in the Wisconsin legislature, I worked hard to pass strong environmental legislation. I was author of the Urban River Program in the Stewardship fund, was able to have commercial fishing banned in inland waterways after Turtle Creek was assaulted by commercial clam fishermen, and helped Beckman Mill receive new state funding.

Before that I worked as an R.N., a geriatric nurse practitioner, and an ADN instructor at Blackhawk Technical College.

I have 3 children and 4 grandchildren. I live in Beloit, am addicted to gardening, and love to hike and bike.

I am impressed with the dedication and commitment of the founders and board of the Welty center to our community and to the environment.

KIRK BERRIDGE

Hello, My name is Kirk Berridge and I recently joined the Welty Environmental Center Board upon the recommendation of Dave Dobson, my professor of Physics at Beloit College many, many years ago..... Dave had introduced me and my brother to the Welty center years ago when it was located in Beckman Mill Park. The two of us told Dave that we thought we could help repair the networking system that was in the old building. Both of us worked for IBM for over 30 years and are now retired.

Although we do not live in the Beloit area, we were very much impressed by the extensive impact that we saw a relatively small group of people had in providing sorely needed environmental education to people of all ages. When the Welty Center moved to Big Hill Park, I was excited by the potential of the center to reach more people in a far nicer facility. I thank Dave and Stephanie for the chance to work with such wonderful people.

BARB SEGUIN

I'm an 83 year-old grandmother who still loves to hike, kayak, cross-country ski, garden, and generally enjoy the out-of-doors. I have a great interest in the environment and environmental education.

I am retired from Blackhawk Technical College where I taught in the Academic Support Department: everything from basic reading, writing, and math to GED and college preparation courses. After retirement, I taught creative and memoir writing classes for Blackhawk and for SLU. (cont'd)

B.SEGUIN (CONT'D)

I am married to Dennis Murphy who shares my outdoor enthusiasms. We live in Beloit. We have six children and 13 grandchildren.

ANN HANKINS

Hi! My name is Ann Hankins, I am the Executive Director of Operations at the Stateline Family YMCA. As a new Welty Center Board member, I am excited not only to learn more about all the educational and entertaining programs Welty has to offer but also to encourage other families and individuals to make their way out to Welty. The Welty Center is truly a gem in the Stateline area. When I'm not at the YMCA, I enjoy spending time with my husband and two daughters, traveling and exercising!

KATIE UDELL

I'm Katie Udell and am excited to be a part of this amazing organization! I'm a Landscape Architect at Angus Young Associates in Janesville and live with my husband, Andy, and my 6-year-old daughter, Natalie. We recently built our home (what we call our "Passive House inspired Home") ourselves in as energy-conscious manner as we could. This summer we will be getting solar panels to bring us closer to our net zero goal. What I love about Welty is learning about the creatures and plants that we co-exist with in a fun setting. The Welty tagline really says it all- Connecting People with Nature. We need this now, more than ever. With technology ever-present in our society. Welty can serve as the antidote to this influence. Experiencing the wonder of nature, particularly for our children is what I am excited to promote with Welty.